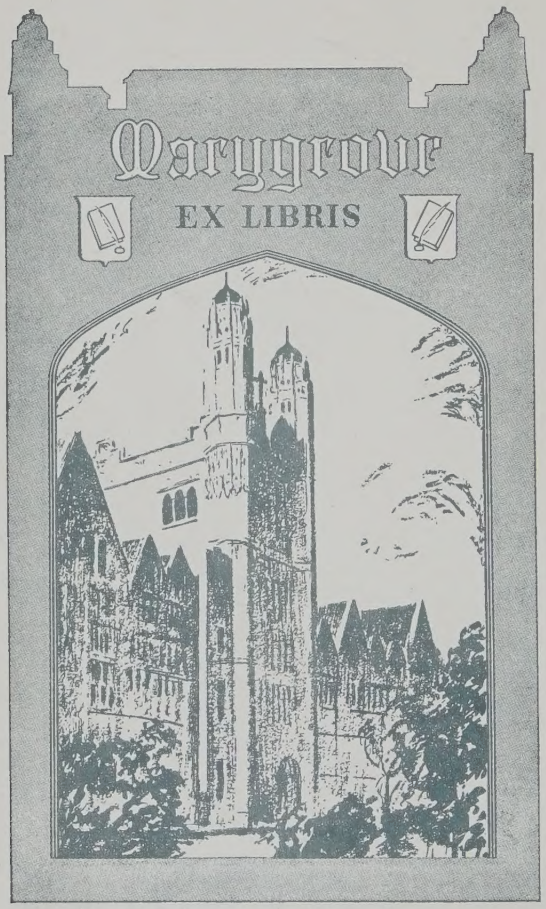
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FIFTY CHRISTMAS POEMS FOR CHILDREN

AN ANTHOLOGY SELECTED BY
FLORENCE B. HYETT

Why do the bells of Christmas ring?
Why do little children sing?
EUGENE FIELD

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
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OLD CAROL

E came all so still
Where His mother was,
As dew in April
That falleth on the grass.

He came all so still
To His mother's bower,
As dew in April
That falleth on the flower.

He came all so still
Where His mother lay,
As dew in April
That falleth on the spray.

Mother and maiden
Was never none but she;
Well may such a lady
God's mother be.

ANONYMOUS

THE LAMB CHILD

HEN Christ the Babe was born,
Full many a little lamb
Upon the wintry hills forlorn
Was nestled near its dam:

And, waking or asleep,
Upon His Mother's breast,
For love of her, each mother-sheep
And baby-lamb He blessed.

JOHN BANISTER TABB

TAR high
Baby low:
'Twixt the two
Wise men go;
Find the baby,
Grasp the star—
Heirs of all things
Near and far!

GEORGE MACDONALD

THE CHRISTMAS CHILD

ITTLE one, who straight hast come
Down the heavenly stair,
Tell us all about your home,
And the father there."

"He is such a one as I
Like as like can be.
Do his will, and, by and by,
Home and him you'll see."

GEORGE MACDONALD

THE LAMB

ITTLE lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bade thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee;
Little lamb, I'll tell thee;
He is callèd by thy name,
For He calls Himself a lamb;
He is meek and He is mild,
He became a little child.
I a child and thou a lamb,
We are callèd by His name.
Little lamb, God bless thee!
Little lamb, God bless thee!

WILLIAM BLAKE

WHY do the bells of Christmas ring?
Why do little children sing?

Once a lovely shining star,
Seen by shepherds from afar,
Gently moved until its light
Made a manger's cradle bright.

There a darling baby lay,
Pillowed soft upon the hay;
And its mother sung and smiled:
"This is Christ, the holy Child!"

Therefore bells for Christmas ring,
Therefore little children sing.

EUGENE FIELD

THE HOLLY

OW happy the holly-tree looks, and how strong,
Where he stands like a sentinel all the year long.

Neither dry summer heat nor cold winter hail
Can make that gay warrior tremble or quail.

He has beamed all the year, but bright scarlet he'll glow
When the ground glitters white with the fresh fallen snow.

EDITH KING

CAROL

HEN the herds were watching
In the midnight chill,
Came a spotless lambkin
From the heavenly hill.

Snow was on the mountains,
And the wind was cold,
When from God's own garden
Dropped a rose of gold.

When 'twas bitter winter,
Houseless and forlorn
In a star-lit stable
Christ the Babe was born.

Welcome, heavenly lambkin,
Welcome, golden rose;
Alleluia, Baby
In the swaddling clothes!

WILLIAM CANTON

SHEPHERD'S SONG

S I rode out this enderes' night,
Of three jolly shepherds I saw a sight
And all about their fold a star shone bright;
They sang, Terli, terlow;
So merrily the shepherds their pipes can blow.

Down from heaven, from heaven so high,
Of angels there came a great company.
With mirth, and joy, and great solemnity
They sang, Terli, terlow;
So merrily the shepherds their pipes can blow.

OLD SONG

VERSES FROM "THE CHERRY-TREE CAROL"

AS Joseph was a walking
He heard an angel sing:
"This night shall be born
Our heavenly king.

"He neither shall be born
In housen nor in hall,
Nor in the place of Paradise,
But in an ox's stall.

"He neither shall be clothed
In purple nor in pall,
But all in fair linen,
As were babies all.

"He neither shall be rocked
In silver nor in gold,
But in a wooden cradle,
That rocks on the mould.

"He neither shall be christened
In white wine nor red,
But with fair spring water,
With which we were christened."

Then Mary took her young son,
And set him on her knee:
"I pray thee now, dear child,
Tell how this world shall be."

"O I shall be as dead, mother,
As the stones in the wall;
O the stones in the street, mother,
Shall mourn for me all.

"And upon a Wednesday
My vow I will make,
And upon Good Friday
My death I will take.

"Upon Easter-day, mother,
My rising shall be;
O the sun and the moon
Shall uprise with me.

"The people shall rejoice,
And the birds they shall sing,
To see the uprising
Of the heavenly king."

TRADITIONAL

A CRADLE SONG

WEET dreams, form a shade
O'er my lovely infant's head!
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams
By happy, silent, moony beams!

Sweet sleep, with soft down
Weave thy brows an infant crown!
Sweet sleep, angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child!

. . . . . .

Sleep, sleep, happy child!
All creation slept and smiled.
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee doth mother weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Holy image I can trace;
Sweet babe, once like thee
Thy Maker lay, and wept for me:

Wept for me, for thee, for all,
When He was an infant small.
Thou His image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee!

Smiles on thee, on me, on all,
Who became an infant small;
Infant smiles are His own smiles:
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.

WILLIAM BLA

THE BIRDS

HEN Jesus Christ was four years old,
The angels brought Him toys of gold,
Which no man ever had bought or sold.

And yet with these He would not play,
He made Him small fowl out of clay,
And blessed them till they flew away:
Tu Creasti Domine.

Jesus Christ, Thou child so wise,
Bless mine hands and fill mine eyes,
And bring my soul to Paradise.

HILAIRE BELLOC

CHRISTMAS EVE

N Christmas Eve the little stars
Sparkle and glisten with delight,
Like strings of glitt'ring diamonds,
Across the darkness of the night.

On Christmas Eve the little stars
Dance in their places in the sky;
Ah! I would go and trip with them
If I could only climb as high.

On Christmas Eve the little stars
Sing merry carols all night long;
But O! I am so far away
I cannot even hear their song.

On Christmas Eve the little stars
Sparkle, and dance, and sing till dawn;
And I am singing too, because
To-morrow will be Chirstmas Morn.

CHARLOTTE DRUITT COLE

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

OVING looks the large-eyed cow,
Loving stares the long-eared ass
At Heaven's glory in the grass!
Child, with added human birth
Come to bring the child of earth
Glad repentance, tearful mirth,
And a seat beside the hearth
At the Father's knee—
Make us peaceful as thy cow;
Make us patient as thine ass;
Make us quiet as thou art now;
Make us strong as thou wilt be.
Make us always know and see
We are his, as well as thou.

GEORGE MACDONALD

THREE CHRISTMAS SONGS

I. THE GUESTS

HY is there such a dancing din
About the stable of the inn?
"An old man, winter white, is here
A wayfarer he doth appear."

"If this be all, why is the night
Lit up with this unearthly light?"
"A maid, the fairest maid, is here,
Some great Lady she doth appear."

"But even so, why do there fly
Such flocks of Angels from the sky?"
"A Babe, a most sweet flower, is here,
A Child from Heaven He doth appear."

II. COCKADOODLEDOO!

OCKADOODLEDOO!
Our Lady's lost her shoe,
St. Joseph's lost his lantern,
What will they do?
The Child will be both Shoes and Staff
And a Lantern too.
In the dark night He'll be their Light.
And their Guide so true
Cockadoodledoo!

They that slept for sorrow
Wake on a glad morrow,
Their goal won,
Their travel done,
Their trouble thro'—
How cunning is His little laugh
His eyes how blue!
Cockadoodledoo!
The sun is high in Egypt's sky,
Cockadoodledoo!

III. A CHILDERMAS RHYME

ABES in the wood
Babes in the tower,
Babes killed at Childermas
In an evil hour,
Babe safe in Egypt
From the tyrant's power,

Wicked uncles, wicked kings,
Robbers counting chains and rings,
Wicked kings who killed for greed,
A good thief who stole for need,
Herod gone and Crookback sped,
The old villainous uncle dead,
When the Babe is crowned a King
That good thief will find his meed
In a green place where robins sing,
Where the holy babes and meek
In the wood play hide-and-seek.

R. L. GALES

CRADLE HYMN

WAY in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay—
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.
I love Thee, Lord Jesus! look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me for ever and love me, I pray;
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for Heaven, to live with Thee there.

MARTIN LUTHER

A SONG FOR THE SEASON

HE Kings to the Stable
They brought sweet spice,
The gold and the silver,
And jewels of price.

But the Dove by the manger
She would not cease
Mourning so softly:
Bring Him Peace; bring Him Peace!

The Kings from the Orient
Brought nard and clove.
The Dove went mourning:
Bring Him Love; Bring Him Love.

What would content Him
In silver and gold,—
A new-born Baby
But one hour old?

Not myrrh shall please Him
Nor the ambergris,
What hath sweet savour
Of His mother's kiss?

There is clash of battle,
And men hate and slay:
From the noise and the tumult
She hides Him away.

But His sleep is fitful
In His Mother's breast,
The Dove goes mourning:
Give Him rest; give Him rest!

KATHARINE TYNAN

IN THE NIGHT

HO is crying in the night
At my nursery door?
What's that pretty shining light
On the nursery floor?"

Mary in her little bed
Rises up to see.
"Jesus, is it you?" she said:
"Come and talk to me."

Nothing stirred: then out she creeps,
Down the winding stair.
All is dark; the household sleeps.
Jesus isn't there.

Out into the winter night,
Barefoot she must go,
In her cotton night-gown white,
Through the glistening snow.

Through the garden fast she goes,
Through the stable yard:
Yes, the manger's here, she knows.
Oh! the door is barred!

Then there came an Angel bright,
Drew away the pin;
All the place was full of light,
As she flitted in.

There, within the stall, He lay!
And the Ox and Ass
Gently moved a little way
Just to let her pass.

And on little Mary, sweet
Mother Mary smiled,
As she kissed the hands and feet
Of the Holy Child.

Ah! He fades! He is not here!
Whither has He flown?
Wake, Miss Mary, wake my dear!
Mary's all alone.

Nurse is standing by the bed,
In the morning grey:
"You've been dreaming, dear," she said.
"And it's Christmas Day."

C. BAIN

"MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB"

HE Blessed Mary had a lamb,
It too was white as snow,
Far whiter than I ever am—
Always and always so.

She found it lying in the stall
Wherefrom the oxen fed,
With hay for bedding, hay for shawl,
And hay beneath its head.

She followed near it every day
In all the paths it trod,
She knew her lamb could never stray
(It was the Lamb of God).

And when the cloud of angels came
And hid It from her sight,
Its heart was near her all the same
Because her own was white.

So when she slept white lilies screened
Her sleep from all alarms,
Till from His Throne her white lamb leaned
And waked her in His Arms.

M. NIGHTINGALE

BETHLEHEM

HERE man was all too marred with sin,
The ass, the ox were bidden in.

Where angels were unmeet to come
These humble entered Holydom.

Their innocent eyes and full of awe
Saw the fulfilment of the law.

There in the stable with the beast
The Christmas Child hath spread His feast.

These gave their bed and eke their board
To be a cradle for their Lord.

Their honey-breath, their tears all mild,
Warmed in the cold the new-born Child.

These His adorers were before
The Kings and Shepherds thronged the door.

And where no angels knelt there kneeled
The innocent creatures of the field.

O simple ones, much honourèd;
He who oppresses you indeed

Oppresses His kind hosts that lay
Once in the stable on the hay.

KATHARINE TYNAN

WAITING FOR THE KINGS

VER the frozen plain snow-white
The three Kings will come tonight;
We shall know by the kettle-drums
Which way the procession comes.

They have come from very far,
Following fast behind a Star,
In their shimmering robes of silk,
Riding horses white as milk.

They bring thro' the starlit dark
Gold once hid in Noë's Ark;
They bear over snow and ice
Bags of musk and myrrh and spice.

They have brought from the warm countree
Cloves like nails from a blossoming tree,
Flowers of a branch of a Tree that grew
In Eden when the world was new.

They have heard of a wondrous thing,
That here is born a little King;
They bring treasures of great worth
To the Treasure of the earth.

When we see the Kings ride past,
Thro' the silence white and vast,
In the night will bloom, methinks,
Velvet roses and striped pinks.

When we see them all aglow
Riding over leagues of snow,
In their robes of red and gold,
We shall never feel the cold.

We will print upon the gifts
They have borne thro' the snow-drifts,
Thro' the bitter weather wild,
Kisses for the little Child.

R. L. GALES

BEHOLD A SILLY TENDER BABE

BEHOLD a silly tender Babe,
In freezing winter night,
In homely manger trembling lies
Alas! a piteous sight.

The inns are full, no man will yield
This little Pilgrim bed;
But forced He is with silly beasts
In crib to shroud His head.

Despise Him not for lying there,
First what He is inquire;
An orient pearl is often found
In depth of dirty mire.

Weigh not His crib, His wooden dish,
Nor beasts that by Him feed;
Weigh not His mother's poor attire,
Nor Joseph's simple weed.

This stable is a prince's court,
This crib His chair of state;
The beasts are parcel of His pomp,
The wooden dish His plate.

. . . . . .

With joy approach, O Christian Wight!
Do homage to thy King;
And highly praise this humble pomp
Which He from heaven doth bring.

ROBERT SOUTHWELL

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

HE Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,
His hair was like a light.
(O weary, weary were the world,
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,
His hair was like a star.
(O stern and cunning are the Kings,
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,
His hair was like a fire.
(O weary, weary is the world,
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up at Him
And all the stars looked down.

G. K. CHESTERTON

EX ORE INFANTIUM

ITTLE Jesus, wast Thou shy
Once, and just so small as I?
And what did it feel like to be
Out of Heaven, and just like me?
Didst Thou sometimes think of *there*,
And ask where all the angels were?
I should think that I would cry
For my house all made of sky;
I would look about the air,
And wonder where my angels were;
And at waking 'twould distress me—
Not an angel there to dress me!

Hadst Thou ever any toys,
Like us little girls and boys?
And didst Thou play in Heaven with all
The angels, that were not too tall,
With stars for marbles? Did the things
Play *Can you see me?* through their wings?
And did Thy Mother let Thee spoil
Thy robes, with playing on our *soil?*
How nice to have them always new
In Heaven, because 'twas quite clean blue.

Didst Thou kneel at night to pray,
And didst Thou join Thy hands, this way?
And did they tire sometimes, being young,
And make the prayer seem very long?
And dost Thou like it best, that we
Should join our hands to pray to Thee?
I used to think, before I knew,
The prayer not said unless we do.
And did Thy Mother at the night
Kiss Thee, and fold the clothes in right?
And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,
Kiss'd, and sweet, and Thy prayers said?

Thou canst not have forgotten all
That it feels like to be small:
And Thou know'st I cannot pray
To Thee in my father's way—
When Thou wast so little, say,
Couldst Thou talk Thy Father's way? —
So, a little Child, come down
And hear a child's tongue like Thy own;
Take me by the hand and walk,
And listen to my baby-talk.
To Thy Father show my prayer
(He will look, Thou art so fair),
And say: "O Father, I, thy Son,
Bring the prayer of a little one."

And He will smile, that children's tongue
Has not changed since Thou wast young!

FRANCIS THOMPSON

A SONG OF CHRISTMAS

THE Christmas moon shines clear and bright;
There were poor travellers such a night
Had neither fire nor candle-light.

One plucked them stars out of the sky
To show the road to travel by;
So that the Ass go warily.

She had all Heaven safe in her hold,
Hidden within her mantle's fold—
All Heaven, and It was one hour old.

Her hair under, over Him spread
His spun-gold coverlet and His bed,
Twined with His little golden head.

She sang and rocked Him to-and-fro
Such songs as little babies know,
With Lullaby Sweet, and Lullalo.

He had no need of moons and suns,
Nor the gold-crested bird-legions,
Singing their lauds and orisons.

The Christmas moon shows a cold beam;
He hath His Mother, she hath Him:
Together they sleep, together dream.

KATHARINE TYNAN

THE HOLLY AND THE IVY

HE holly and the ivy,
Now are both well grown.
Of all the trees that are in the wood
The holly bears the crown.

The holly bears a blossom
As white as the lily flower,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To be our sweet Saviour.

The holly bears a berry
As red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To do poor sinners good.

The holly bears a prickle
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
On Christmas Day in the morn.

The holly bears a bark
As bitter as any gall,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all.

The holly and the ivy
Now are both well grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood
The holly bears the crown.

TRADITIONAL

A CRADLE HYMN

USH! my dear, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed!
Heavenly blessings without number
Gently falling on thy head.

. . . . . .

How much better thou'rt attended
Than the Son of God could be,
When from heaven He descended
And became a child like thee!

Soft and easy is thy cradle:
Coarse and hard thy Saviour lay,
When His birthplace was a stable
And His softest bed was hay.

. . . . . .

See the kinder shepherds round Him,
Telling wonders from the sky!
Where they sought Him, there they found Him,
With His Virgin Mother by.

See the lovely babe adressing;
Lovely infant, how He smiled!
When He wept, the Mother's blessing
Soothed and hush'd the holy child.

Lo, He slumbers in His manger,
Where the hornèd oxen fed:
Peace, my darling; here's no danger,
Here's no ox anear thy bed.

ISAAC WATTS

BEFORE DAWN

IM-BERRIED is the mistletoe
With globes of sheenless grey,
The holly mid ten thousand thorns
Smolders its fires away;
And in the manger Jesu sleeps
This Christmas Day.

Bull unto bull with hollow throat
Makes echo every hill,
Cold sheep in pastures thick with snow
The air with bleatings fill;
While of His Mother's heart this Babe
Takes His sweet will.

All flowers and butterflies lie hid,
The blackbird and the thrush
Pipe but a little as they flit
Restless from bush to bush;
Even to the robin Gabriel hath
Cried softly, "Hush!"

Now night is astir with burning stars
In darkness of the snow;
Burdened with frankincense and myrrh
And gold the Strangers go
Into a dusk where one dim lamp
Burns faintly, Lo!

No snowdrop yet its small head nods,
In winds of winter drear;
No lark at casement in the sky
Sings matins shrill and clear;
Yet in this frozen mirk the Dawn
Breathes, Spring is here!

WALTER DE LA MARE

THE WAITS

HERE were sparkles on the window-pane
and sparkles in the sky,
The moon it sparkled like a star above the
world so high,
There was star-shine on the ceiling, there was star-shine
on the bed,
There was star-shine in my eyes, I think, and star-shine
in my head.
I clambered from my sleep, I did; I flung the window
wide,
I wanted all that waited in the Christmas Eve outside,
I wanted for myself to hear the Christmas people sing,
I wanted for myself to hear the Christmas joy-bells
ring.
And there outside were waiting three grey Shepherds
in the snow,
(I knew that they were Shepherds, for they all had
crooks, you know,)
And when they saw me waiting too they sang to me a
song—
The stars, they caught and whispered it the whole wide
sky along.
And then the Shepherds went their way and three black
camels came,
They stayed beneath the window there and waited just
the same,
And each black camel on his back had brought an
Eastern King,
And though each King was very great each had a song
to sing.

They sang it as the Shepherds sang, a little low sweet song,—
The white stars caught and whispered it the whole wide sky along;
And then the camels went their way, I watched them down the street,
The snow lay white and soft and still beneath their silent feet.

There was singing in the tree-tops, there was singing in the sky,
The moon was singing to the clouds above the world so high,
And all the stars were singing too and when I looked below,
I saw a little, tiny Child was waiting in the snow.

And first I watched him wait there—watched and only waved my hand,
For though the song was in my heart I did not understand,
Until at last it burst in words, because at last I knew,
And then he looked at me and laughed and sang the star-song too.

And right across the misty fields I heard the church bells ring,
The star-song echoed far and wide for all the world to sing,
But still the tiny Child stood there—the Child that once was born—
We sang His birthday song—we did—upon His Christmas morn.

M. NIGHTINGALE

IN PRÆSEPIO

N stable straw the Infant lay,
Turned from the hostelry away,
There was no room its doors within,
For Him Who is the whole world's Inn.

Creation sang, no longer dumb,
Because her great Desire was come;
The sad earth in His joy had part,
Who bore her sorrow in His Heart.

The Angels danced, the Shepherds piped,
Because earth's tears away were wiped;
The Ox and Ass adoring saw
The Infant lying in the straw.

R. L. GALES

WHEN CHRIST WAS BORN

HEN Christ was born of Mary free,
In Bethlehem in that fair citie,
Angels sang there with mirth and glee,
In Excelsis Gloria!

Herdsmen beheld these angels bright,
To them appearing with great light,
Who said, "God's Son is born this night,"
In Excelsis Gloria!

This King is come to save mankind,
As in Scripture truths we find,
Therefore this song have we in mind,
In Excelsis Gloria!

Then, dear Lord, for Thy great grace,
Grant us the bliss to see Thy face,
That we may sing to Thy solace,
In Excelsis Gloria!

TRADITIONAL

THE CAROL OF THE POOR CHILDREN

E are the poor children, come out to see the
sights
On this day of all days, on this night of
nights,
The stars in merry parties are dancing in the sky,
A fine star, a new star, is shining on high!

We are the poor children, our lips are frosty blue,
We cannot sing our carol as well as rich folk do,
Our bellies are so empty we have no singing voice,
But this night of all nights good children must rejoice

We do rejoice, we do rejoice, as hard as we can try,
A fine star, a new star is shining in the sky!
And while we sing our carol, we think of the delight
The happy kings and shepherds make in Bethlehem
to-night.

Are we naked, mother, and are we starving poor—
Oh, see what gifts the kings have brought outside the
stable door,
Are we cold, mother, the ass will give his hay
To make the manger warm and keep the cruel winds
away.

We are the poor children, but not so poor who sing
Our carol with our voiceless hearts to greet the new
born king,
On this night of all nights, when in the frosty sky
A new star, a kind star, is shining on high!

RICHARD MIDDLETON

STAR OF THE EAST

TAR of the East, that long ago
Brought wise men on their way
Where, angels singing to and fro,
The Child of Bethlehem lay—
Above that Syrian hill afar
Thou shinest out to-night, O Star!

Star of the East, the night were drear
But for the tender grace
That with thy glory comes to cheer
Earth's loneliest, darkest place;
For by that charity we see
Where there is hope for all and me.

Star of the East! show us the way
In wisdom undefiled
To seek that manger out and lay
Our gifts before the Child—
To bring our hearts and offer them
Unto our King in Bethlehem!

EUGENE FIELD

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

EFORE the paling of the stars,
Before the winter morn,
Before the earliest cock-crow,
Jesus Christ was born:
Born in a stable,
Cradled in a manger,
In the world His Hands had made
Born a stranger.

Priest and King lay fast asleep
In Jerusalem,
Young and old lay fast asleep
In crowded Bethlehem:
Saint and angel, ox and ass,
Kept a watch together
Before the Christmas daybreak
In the winter weather.

Jesus on His mother's breast
In the stable cold,
Spotless Lamb of God was He,
Shepherd of the Fold:
Let us kneel with Mary Maid,
With Joseph bent and hoary,
With saint and angel, ox and ass,
To hail the King of Glory.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

YULE-TIDE FIRES

LEANSE with the burning log of oak
The canker of thy care,
Deck with the scarlet-berried bough
The temple of the fair;
Spread pure-white linen for a feast,
Perchance some guest may share.

Give forth thy gold and silver coins,
For they were lent to thee;
Put out to usury thy dross,
One talent gaineth three.
Perchance the hungered and the poor
May pray to God for thee.

Once a pale star rose in the East
For watching herds to see,
And weakness came to Bethlehem,
And strength to Galilee.
Perchance! if thou dost keep thy tryst
A star may rise for thee.

ANONYMOUS

SIX GREEN SINGERS

HE frost of the moon fell over my floor
And six green singers stood at my door.

"What do ye here that music make?"
"Let us come in for Christ's sweet Sake."

"Long have ye journeyed in coming here?"
"Our Pilgrimage was the length of the year."

"Where do ye make for?" I asked of them.
"Our Shrine is a Stable in Bethlehem."

"What will ye do as ye go along?"
"Sing to the world an ever-green song."

"What will ye sing for the listening earth?"
"One will sing of a brave-souled Mirth,

"One of the Holiest Mystery,
The Glory of glories shall one song be,

"One of the Memory of things,
One of the Child's imaginings,

"One of our songs is the fadeless Faith,
And all are the Life more mighty than death."

"Ere ye be gone that music make,
Give me an alms for Christ's sweet Sake."

"Six green branches we leave with you;
See they be scattered your house-place through.

"The staunch blithe Holly your board shall grace,
Mistletoe bless your chimney place,

"Laurel to crown your lighted hall,
Over your bed let the Yew-bough fall,

"Close by the cradle the Christmas Fir,
For elfin dreams in its branches stir,

"Last and loveliest, high and low,
From ceil to floor let the Ivy go."

From each glad guest I received my gift
And then the latch of my door did lift—

"Green singers, God prosper the song ye make
As ye sing to the world for Christ's sweet Sake."

ELEANOR FARJEON

THAT HOLY THING

HEY all were looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high:
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

O Son of Man, to right my lot
Naught but Thy presence can avail;
Yet on the road Thy wheels are not,
Nor on the sea Thy sail!

My how or when Thou wilt not heed,
But come down thine own secret stair,
That Thou mayst answer all my need—
Yea, every bygone prayer.

GEORGE MACDONALD

CHRISTMAS

A BOY was born at Bethlehem
that knew the haunts of Galilee.
He wandered on Mount Lebanon,
and learned to love each forest tree.

But I was born at Marlborough,
and love the homely faces there;
and for all other men besides
'tis little love I have to spare.

I should not mind to die for them,
my own dear downs, my comrades true.
But that great heart of Bethlehem,
he died for men he never knew.

And yet, I think, at Golgotha,
as Jesus' eyes were closed in death,
they saw with love most passionate
the village street at Nazareth.

E. HILTON YOUNG

TO HIS SAVIOUR, A CHILD; A PRESENT BY A CHILD

O pretty child, and bear this flower
Unto thy little Saviour;
And tell Him, by that bud now blown,
He is the Rose of Sharon known:
When thou hast said so, stick it there
Upon his bib, or stomacher:
And tell Him, (for good handsell too)
That thou hast bought a whistle new,
Made of a clean straight oaten reed,
To charm His cries, (at time of need:)
Tell Him, for coral, thou hast none;
But if thou hadst, He should have one;
But poor thou art, and known to be
Even as moneyless as He.
Lastly, if thou canst win a kiss
From those mellifluous lips of His;
Then never take a second on
To spoil the first impression.

ROBERT HERRICK

AN ODE TO THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR

N numbers, and but these few,
I sing Thy birth, O Jesu!
Thou pretty baby, born here,
With sup'rabundant scorn here;
Who for Thy princely port here,
Hadst for Thy place
Of birth a base
Out-stable for Thy court here.

Instead of neat enclosures
Of interwoven osiers,
Instead of fragrant posies
Of daffodils and roses,
Thy cradle, Kingly Stranger,
As Gospel tells,
Was nothing else
But here a homely manger.

. . . . . .

The Jews they did disdain Thee,
But we will entertain Thee,
With glories to await here,
Upon Thy princely state here;
And more for love than pity,
From year to year,
We'll make Thee, here,
A free-born of our city.

ROBERT HERRICK

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

HAT sweeter music can we bring
Than a carol, for to sing
The birth of this our heavenly King?
Awake the voice; awake the string!
Heart, ear, and eye, and everything!

. . . . . .

Why does the chilling winter's morn
Smile, like a field beset with corn?
Or smell, like to a mead new-shorn,
Thus, on the sudden?

Come and see
The cause, why things thus fragrant be.
'Tis He is born, whose quickening birth
Gives light and lustre, public mirth,
To heaven, and the under-earth.

. . . . . .

The darling of the world is come,
And fit it is we find a room
To welcome Him. The nobler part
Of all the house here, is the heart,
Which we will give Him; and bequeath
This holly, and this ivy wreath,
To do Him honour; who's our King,
And Lord of all this revelling.

ROBERT HERRICK

THE OXEN

HRISTMAS Eve, and twelve of the clock.
"Now they are all on their knees,"
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If some one said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom
Hoping it might be so.

THOMAS HARDY

I SAW THREE SHIPS

SAW three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And who was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
And who was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day in the morning?

Our Saviour Christ and his ladye,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Our Saviour Christ and his ladye,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Pray whither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
Pray whither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas Day in the morning?

O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
O they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the bells on Earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the bells on Earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the angels in Heaven shall sing,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the angels in Heaven shall sing,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the souls on Earth shall sing,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the souls on Earth shall sing,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

OLD CAROL

NOËL

I

N a winter's night long time ago
(*The bells ring loud and the bells ring low*),
When high howled wind, and down fell snow
(Carillon, Carilla).
Saint Joseph he and Nostre Dame,
Riding on an ass, full weary came
From Nazareth into Bethlehem.
And the small child Jesus smile on you.

II

And Bethlehem inn they stood before
(*The bells ring less and the bells ring more*),
The landlord bade them begone from his door
(Carillon, Carilla).
"Poor folk" (says he), "must lie where they may,
For the Duke of Jewry comes this way,
With all his train on Christmas Day."
And the small child Jesus smile on you.

III

Poor folk that may my carol hear
(*The bells ring single and the bells ring clear*),
See! God's one child had hardest cheer!
(Carillon, Carilla).
Men grown hard on a Christmas morn;
The dumb beast by and a babe forlorn.
It was very, very cold when our Lord was born.
And the small child Jesus smile on you.

IV

Now these were Jews as Jews must be
(*The bells ring merry and the bells ring free*).
But Christian men in a band are we
(Carillon, Carilla).
Empty we go, and ill be-dight,
Singing Noël on a winter's night.
Give up to sup by the warm firelight,
And the small child Jesus smile on you.

HILAIRE BELLOC

UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN

IVEN, not lent,
And not withdrawn—once sent—
This Infant of mankind, this One,
Is still the little welcome Son.

New every year,
New-born and newly dear,
He comes with tidings and a song,
The ages long, the ages long.

Even as the cold
Keen winter grows not old,
As childhood is so fresh, foreseen,
And spring in the familiar green.

Sudden as sweet
Come the expected feet;
All joy is young, and new all art,
And He, too, whom we have by heart.

ALICE MEYNELL

VERSES FROM THE SHEPHERD'S HYMN

E saw Thee in Thy balmy nest,
Young dawn of our eternal day;
We saw Thine eyes break from the East
And chase the trembling shades away:
We saw Thee, and we blest the sight,
We saw Thee by Thine own sweet light.

Poor world, said I, what wilt thou do
To entertain this starry stranger?
Is this the best thou canst bestow—
A cold and not too cleanly manger?
Contend, the powers of heaven and earth,
To fit a bed for this huge birth.

. . . . . .

I saw the curl'd drops, soft and slow,
Come hovering o'er the place's head,
Off'ring their whitest sheets of snow.
To furnish the fair infant's bed.
Forbear, said I, be not too bold;
Your fleece is white, but 'tis too cold.

. . . . . .

To Thee, meek Majesty, soft King
Of simple graces and sweet loves!
Each of us his lamb will bring,
Each his pair of silver doves!
At last, in fire of Thy fair eyes,
Ourselves become our own best sacrifice.

RICHARD CRAWSHAW

VERSES FROM THE HYMN ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

UT peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of light
His reign of peace upon the earth began:
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kist
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wav

. . . . . .

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;
Full little thought they than,
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below:
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
As never was by mortal finger strook,
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringèd noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took;
The air such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly clos

. . . . . .

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
(If ye have power to touch our senses so)
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
And let the bass of Heaven's deep organ blow,
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

For if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back and fetch the age of gold,
And speckled Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould,
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

. . . . . .

But see! the Virgin blest,
Hath laid her Babe to rest,
Time is our tedious song should here have ending,
Heaven's youngest teemèd star,
Hath fix'd her polish'd car,
Her sleeping Lord with hand-maid lamp attending:
And all about the courtly stable,
Bright-harness'd Angels sit in order serviceable.

JOHN MILTON

FROM "IN MEMORIAM"

RING out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

. . . . . .

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring in the fuller minstrel in.

. . . . . .

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand·
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

ALFRED TENNYSON

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